

T C Lawrence

THE NATURE O F Spiritual Rebellion

CONSIDER'D
And applied to the Presbyterians;

In which their Commission, either to PREACH,
or to Administer the SACRAMENTS is
proved to be ineffectual :

IN A
SERMON,

Preached by a Persecuted and Suffering
CLERGY-MAN of the CHURCH.

P S A L M . LXXXIX . 21 , 22 .

*Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved
with those that rise up against thee?
I hate them with perfect Hatred : I count them mine Enemies.*

E P I N B U R G H :

Printed in the YEAR M. DCC. XVIII.

T H E P R E F A C E.

THE Subject of this Sermon wants no Apology :

As it contains the Essentials of the Church, and all the Benefits of Christian Worship, the Notions therein contained will stand their Ground against any attack the Presbyterians can make ; and I flatter my self that they will find it the most difficult Task they ever had upon their Hands, to disprove one single Position therein maintained. I design a more full Enclaircissement upon the same Topics, in an Answer which will be speedily published to Mr. Anderson of Dumbarton. In the mean Time I hope the Reader will take the hint to consider the nature of Church Communion, and of the vast Comforts which flow from the Presbyterian worship, which assures Election to its Members and eternal Life, before they can prove that they are Baptized. I need say no more in this Place, but leave the Determination to candid and impartial Readers, for whom this Work is recommended for their kind Acceptance thereof.

SCS #8015

1 Cor.



I C O R. XII. 3.

No Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.



HE Apostle in this Chapter relates the various Offices and Posts assigned to the Christians in his Days. To some (says he) is given the Spirit of Prophecy, to some the Gift of Healing ; some are Apostles, some Prophets ; but still it is the same Spirit which worketh in all, *i. e.* whether they are those extraordinary Powers of the first miraculous Ages of the Church, or such as were to continue till the coming of Christ at the last Day, they all proceeded either from the Influence, or from the Authority of the Spirit of God. From whence we may safely draw this Conclusion, That without the Authority of this Spirit no religious Office can be

performed : Which I think may plainly be deduced from my Text, considered with the subsequent Verses of this Chapter ; for in the 4th, 5th and 6th Verses he specifies Diversities of Gifts, Diversities of Administrations, and Diversities of Operations. By the Gifts of the Spirit are understood the Word of Wisdom, the Word of Knowledge, Faith, &c. The Administrations of the Spirit are the Ministry of the Gospel, as Apostles, Teachers, and the like ; and the Operations of the Spirit are Prophecy, working of Miracles, healing Diseases, divers kinds of Tongues, and the Interpretation of Tongues : All which are expressed mentioned in this Chapter, and I have ranged them in Order for the more particular distinguishing the various Offices of the Spirit alluded to therein ; which leads us on also to have an Idea of the Difference between the Graces and the Powers of the Spirit. For Wisdom, Faith and Knowledge are the Graces of the Spirit, and may be common to all Ranks and Degrees of Men ; but to teach and to prophecy are derived from the Powers of the Spirit, and suppose an Ability to act, and are invested in particular Persons ; which detects the Folly of those Men who pretend to exercise such Powers by Virtue of Grace ; which Pretence they have turned into an unlimited Commission to act what they please, not considering at the same Time the Apostle's Words in this Chapter, nor being able to produce one of their Saints with all his

his Predestination and Grace, who has been able to work one Miracle since the clear Light of the Gospel (as they say) has shined amongst them.

I shall therefore from the Words of my Text deduce these following Heads.

I. That no Man can perform any religious Office without lawful Appointment.

II. The Manner of that Appointment.

III. The Consequences of an Usurpation of those Powers.

As to the *1st*, It clearly follows from my Text ; the Sense of which plainly implies, That no Man can preach the Satisfaction & Mediation of Christ, but by the Holy Ghost *i.e.* by the Authority of the Holy Ghost : For if we mean thereby the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we must necessarily make the Preacher infallible, which contradicts even common Sense and common Experience, and the Notion is the Parent of Enthusiasm.

This must relate to preaching, because the contrary Supposition makes the Sense of the Text run thus ; No Man in ordinary Conversation can say that Jesus is the Saviour of Mankind without Inspiration ; which is Quakerism : For surely it cannot require such a vast and grand Commission to speak what every Man believes in his Heart, and a Truth which ought to be published to the World.

Nor does it relate to the common working of the Spirit in the Hearts of Men, for he speaks

through the whole Chapter concerning the particular distinguishing Gifts and Powers of the Spirit, which enables Persons to exercise their different Offices, some to be Prophets, some Teachers, &c. and he directs the Scope of this Chapter to that Confusion which should arise from Ambition and usurping of Church Powers ; for we must observe, the Chrintians to whom he directs this Epistle, were naturally inclined to Sedition both in Church and State ; *for (says he) ye are yet carnal : For whereas there is among you Envyng, and Strife, and Divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as Men ?* Chap. III. 3. They moreover put themselves under the Distinction of Parties, and the Pastors of the Congregations named their Followers by their own Names : One was of *Apollas*, another of *Cephas*. Also in the Chapter from whence my Text is taken, says he, *Are all Apostles ? Are all Prophets ? Are all Teachers ? Are all Workers of Miracles ? Have all the Gifts of Healing ? Do all speak with Tongues ? Do all interpret ?* We may plainly perceive that he hints at the Invasion of Offices and irregular Contentions which had arisen in the Infancy of that Church.

Our blessed Saviour gave the first Example of this Mission ; he sent forth the seventy and the Apostles to preach the Kingdom of Heaven, and to prepare the Jews for that grand Mission which followed his Death, before his Ascension and sitting on the right Hand of God the Father. The Apostles

Apostles after they had supplied the Place of *Judas*, and invested *Matthias* with the same Powers they enjoyed themselves, constituted the succeeding Orders in the Church, as appears fully from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the Epistles of St. Paul.

Nor indeed is this more than agreeable to common Sense and Reason, if we consider the Nature of Ecclesiastical Powers, and their Dignity.

The Nature of them regards the Sacraments, Confirmation, Absolution, Teaching and Praying. These are Powers which are settled to endure whilst Christianity remains upon the Earth, till the general Conflagration puts an end to all temporal Administrations, and opens an actual Communion with all the Saints in Heaven. Of these Baptism may in some Measure be said to be chief, as it is a Sacrament which makes us capable of the Benefits of our Christian Covenants, the Death of Christ and his Satisfaction for our Sins : This gives us a Right to the succeeding Participation of his Body, and of his Blood, our Pretensions to Grace and to be Heirs of eternal Life. But we may as well pretend to baptize ourselves, as to suffer that great and glorious Priviledge to be made common, which is indeed the first Step of our spiritual Gradation towards Christian Perfection, and a complete Enjoyment of God. Then, as to the Eucharist, tho there is no material, there is a virtual Conversion of the Elements performed :

There is the grand Representation made of that glorious Body which now reigns in Heaven. But can this be promiscuously done by all Men, or is it possible that God should permit his Holy Spirit to attend so scandalous a Prostitution.

The like may be said of Confirmation : 'Tis the final Seal of our Baptismal Covenant, 'tis the Invocation of the Holy Ghost to bestow the Gifts and Graces of Christianity upon the Person to be confirmed.

To conclude, for the sake of Brevity, Teaching is an authoritative pronouncing Salvation to Mankind, and you may as well say that a private Person may assume to himself the Character of a publick Minister, as that all Men may indiscriminately make themselves Ambassadors from the King of Heaven, and pronounce his Messages to the World.

Thus far as to the Nature of the sacerdotal Office, which if duly considered will appear incommunicable to any but to those commissioned for that Purpose ; for the contrary would make as great an Havock in Christian Societies, as tho in the State every one should assume the Character of an Ambassador, or should issue out Pardons for Criminals, or give Patents and eminent Priviledges to their fellow Subjects at their Pleasure.

The Dignity of these Offices comes next under my Consideration.

To make a Christian is a new spiritual Creation

on. It is called therefore in the Scriptures, putting of the old Man, a renewing of our Faculties, and a perfect Change of the Soul. Our first Creation without the latter is only a Curse upon us, an Introduction to Misery and to Death: But the latter opens the Gates of Heaven, robs Death of all its Terrors, and bestows upon us eternal Life. Can any impartial Person imagine that the performing of these glorious Offices does not communicate Honour and Reputation to the Persons in whose Hands they are.

As the Sacrament of the Body & Blood of Christ is made the inseparable Attendant of that Grace which God confers upon his Creatures; as it is a Representation of that Grand Sacrifice which was offered for the Sins of the World, if there is any Honour due to the blessed Redeemer of the World, surely there must be no small Communication of that Honour to the sacred Elements; and if to them, surely to the Person by whose Mouth they are blessed, and by whose Means they become what they are.

Confirmation, I told you before, is calling down the Spirit of God, and I think it is no small Honour for a Man to be the Mediator between the Spirit of God and our selves. Away with worldly Honours and the Favour of Courts; they are all Folly and Vanity compared to these glorious Priviledges.

Likewise as to Prayer, a Man may pray for the Pardon

Pardon of his own Sins in private, but for him to approach the Presence of God in a publick Congregation uncall'd, and make his Demands for others, is a greater Freedom than becomes us to use even to an earthly Monarch.

From what has been said, 'tis evident that these Powers cannot be promiscuously exercised : It remains that I next explain the manner of their Appointment.

Our blessed Saviour, before his Ascension into Heaven, laid the Foundation of his Church in the Apostles ; from whence that Superstructure was raised, which was compleated before their Death. To them he gave full Powers to teach and baptize all Nations, and at the Feast of *Pentecost* he sent the Comforter, which he promised should continue with his Church to the End of the World ; and by that they were enabled to go through all the Parts of their Apostolick Functions : From that they had the Gift of Tongues, and the Power of working Miracles ; and thus their Sounds went to the uttermost Parts of the Earth.

Thus they had their Commission from Christ, which ought indeed to be consider'd first, as essentially necessary in this Case ; for he is the Head of his Church below, and he governs that Church by his Substitutes, who consequently must derive their Powers from him.

If the Church is a Body of Men under one Head, which is Christ, it must be consider'd as a Society ;

Society; but 'tis certain none but Christ at first gave Lawsto this Society. The Church is his Propriety, he purchas'd it with his Blood, and he is a Mediator for it with the Father. Whoever therefore, in Opposition to him, pretends to make Laws for this Church, is Antichrist, according to the true Description thereof in the Scriptures. Some therefore, who make so great a Noise against Antichrist, may search for him too far if they look beyond themselves.

If Christ is the supreme Head and first Law-Giver in this Society, all Power must flow from him; for that Power which does not come from him, must act in Opposition to Christ, and consequently from that Moment it commences rebellious and unlawfull.

Therefore the People cannot, by their own Power, send Ambassadors to him, because they are his Subjects: He chuses who shall be the Mediators between him and his Church, and them only will he hear; and thro' their Hands alone do all those gratefull Services pass, which incline him to be propitious to us, and mediate with his Father in our Behalf for the Remission of our Sins.

If therefore all Ecclesiastical Power flows originally from Christ, and now acts in Subordination to him, it remains that no Person can at this time act, but by Commission from him, which leads me on to consider how this Mission must be derived.

That

That our Blessed Saviour did not give these Powers to all the faithfull without Distinction, I proved in the first Part of this Discourse, nor is it

* *Westminſt. Confess. Chap. 30. § 1, 2.* The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a Government in the Hand of Church-Officers, distinct from the civil Magistrate.

To these Officers the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed, by vertue whereof they have Power respectively to retain and remit Sins, to shut that Kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word & Censures; and to open it to penitent Sinners, by the Ministry of the Gospel, and by Absolution from Censures, as Occasion shall require.

Ibid. Chap. 31. § 3. It belongeth to Synods and Councils ministerially to determine Controversies of Faith, and Cases of Conscience, to set down Rules and Directions for the better ordering of the publick Worship of God, and Government of his Church; to receive Complaints in Cases of Mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same.

denied even by the Presbyterians, * who govern what they call their Church, tho in a different manner from ours: And indeed the Independents themselves are only Presbytery broken into numerous Fractions, and they make as many Churches as Congregations, only without the Coalition of Synods and General Assemblies.

So that I have no Enemies to contend with as to this Point but the *Eraſtians*, the rest being unawares drawn in by their own Concessions to acknowledge that there is a Government in the Church, whether in single Congregations, Presbyteries or Bishops.

Therefore this Government must either be derived from Christ to particular Persons, (and if so there can be no other Power since, but it must be derived from those particular

cular Persons;) or it must be humane, which our Adversaries will by no Means suffer; or it must be sent down since by Divine Revelation, which I am sure they cannot shew, altho they pretend to have kept a Correspondence with the Spirit from the Days of *John Knox's* preaching his fiery Gospel.

There must therefore be a continual Chain from Christ down to this Age which can authorize any Person to administer the Sacraments, to preach, to pray, or to perform any other religious Office. We have no other Mark of the Will of Christ in this Case, because he has declared no other. And as for those who pretend to have Authority from the secret Calls of the Spirit, I consign them over to the Quakers.

But as our Blessed Saviour, just before his Ascension, directed his Commission only to the Apostles, one Link interrupted of this Chain from thence to this present Age, from that time in which the Interruption begins, renders the Power humane, and consequently a Defect of Authority follows; for 'tis not length of Time that can blot out this Defect and give Right to unjust Possessors in a Church: For Christ himself must cease to be, before they can plead Possession without Claimants: For while Christ reigns in Heaven, he will have a Claim to his Church.

As for those who, in the present publick Church of *Scotland*, call themselves Presbyters, and can carry

carry their Succession up no farther than 200 Years; yet when they stop and cannot trace it up till the Apostles Days, there appears the Defect of Commission. Who gave that Person, from whom the Interruption began, a Power to be a Priest? He must assume it either of his own Head, or from some incompetent Authority. And could that Usurpation intitle him to make another what he was not himself? That this cannot be good, our own common Sense will tell us.

'Tis not therefore assuming the Name and usurping the Powers of a Priest will make a Man such, 'tis so far from that, it renders him the vilest of Wretches, sacreligiously like *Korah, Dathan* and *Abiram*, to take upon him what really was not his own.

But to make it impossible by any secret or clandestine Arts to defeat this Succession, the Apostles ordered Imposition of Hands; an Act which was perpetually to attend the Investiture of that sacred Commission. We have Proofs of this from the Acts of the Apostles. The Deacons, after Fasting and Prayer, had Hands laid on them; as likewise had *Barnabas*, who was separated for the Ministry in that manner. This was also done in the most publick Way. The old Men could remember they had seen Hands laid on the Ordainers, &c. So this memorial Custom was carried up to the Apostles themselves: It was therefore impossible that any pretended Imposer of Hands should not be detected. I

I need not say what an Advantage this is to the Order of Bishops, and how much more Time will increase the same, when our Posterity 40000 Years hence, if the World should endure so long, may see the Apostolick Times in their own. And will not this be even an admirable Proof for the Christian Religion? Does not this make Bishops venerable Monuments of Antiquity? Or can there be a better Evidence of that Order and just Decorum the Apostles kept, in sending forth a preaching Ministry into the World?

The Apostles, together with this Imposition of Hands, assign'd different Powers. *Barnabas* was twice ordained; so that in all Probability he was first a Deacon, and afterwards a Priest: But Bishops were always looked upon as the genuine Successors of the Apostles, for which we have undoubted Proofs, which I shall not croud into the narrow Space of a Sermon; but I shall only observe, they appointed these Bishops as Governours of the Church; to them was confin'd the Power of ordaining others, and they are still, by that Authority, our spiritual Governours. For we must consider the Christian Religion, or the Church militant, as a Society of Men united for the Propagation of the eternal Happiness of Mankind, and it is as necessary that it should be kept in a due and regular Order, as that civil Societies should be so preserved in theirs; for the Apostle, in the Chapter from whence my Text is taken, has told

told us, That all are not Apostles, nor all Prophets, nor all Teachers, nor Workers of Miracles; and by the same Rule all are not Bishops, nor all Priests, nor all Deacons; and to prevent this Confusion, there must be a governing Power to restrain the Invasion of those Offices. And it is equally evident that when those Offices are invaded, it must be in Defiance of that Power, and answers to Rebellion in the State.

To make things common is to make them vile; the Sun rowls thro' the Firmament glorious, and as the *Psalmist* expresses it, *rejoycing as a Giant to run his Course*. But still he passes unobserved, (except by the Country Man, who sometimes wants his Heat) because he is common and too communicative of his Influence. The Earth puts forth surprizing Beauties, which we every Day tread upon with our Feet, and they are unregarded because they are common. But it would be of fatal Consequence, if the Lord's Supper and the Worship of God should so prove, because the Efficacy of those Institutions depends upon a Veneration in the Heart for them. It is a dreadfull Sign of the Decay of Religion, if we make that Sacrament only the Occasion of Eating and Drinking, which I am afraid you of this Kingdom know to be a just Charge; nor is it much better to make Baptism only pouring on Water, which may be done by the meanest Person in the Parish.

I would not here forget the Necessity of such a Government

Government as I have mentioned in Relation to Discipline ; for it is a general Observation, That the Yoke of our Equals or Inferiours is much more intolerable than that of our just Superiours, who are our artificial Parents, and have a more Father-like Affection for us.

The Result of what has been said leads me on naturally to consider the Consequences of Schism.

I As Church Governours are regularly appointed by God in a Christian Society, they consequently govern by Divine Right : Therefore to resist those Governours, by acting in Opposition to their Commands, or setting up a Power against theirs, is as much Rebellion in the Church, as when we make Sheriffs, or Lieutenants, or call Conventions against the express Command of the supreme Power in a Kingdom.

This is so plain, and so evident a Case, and so agreeable to natural Reason, that I wonder there should be any who pretend Loyalty to the State, yet cannot pay as great a Regard to the Laws of God, as to the Laws of Man. I am satisfied such Pretences to Loyalty are perfect Humour ; for the supreme Power of the Universe has certainly as rational a Claim to our Obedience, as a mortal Man can have. By him Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice ; but he never set them up as Rivals to his Power, as Images to be worshipped by Men, while the awful Majesty they represent is unregarded. How much am I deceived, if while

I swell with my Loyalty to my Prince, and think it meritorious to fight under his Banner, I am in actual War against Heaven ?

Those who usurp Ecclesiastical Powers are the Heads of such a Rebellion, and those who abett and support them, by hearing them pray or preach, are Parties in the same.

I charitably impute the Faults of some to Ignorance in this Case. Spiritual Things are not so much the Object of our Senses as temporal : There is no Noise of Canon in this War, nor clashing of Arms ; nor can we see the Spirit when it flies away from the sacred Mysteries, and leaves to the unworthy Person only naked Bread and Wine. Some therefore run to Schismatical Churches, because they are open, without Fear, without Terror, or Uneasiness ; they are handsome Conveniences, and Men generally choose the broad Way, and reject the narrow Road which leads to Persecution, when they can scarcely crowd thro', and meet with Thorns and Briers in the Way.

As the Church spiritually answers to the State, we shall find the Notion of Rebellion in either run in an equal Pace : For if I frequent their Places of Worship, hear them pray or preach, how can I escape the Contagion ? Is not the Priest a Mediator, an Intercessor for the People ? Does he not approach the Throne of God, and offer up his Prayers for their Souls ? But is not God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, or can he turn his Ear to the prayers

Prayers of one who is in actual Rebellion against him, and even in the very Act of Prayer fights against him as effectually as tho he fired Canon and endeavoured to storm him out of his Throne? In Praying he usurps and bids Defiance to God; he opposes his Mandates, and impudently looks him in the Face, interceeds where he has no Interest, and sins when he prays. What an hopeful Mediator is this between Christ and his Church?

It would be absurd for a private Criminal to solicit a Pardon from his Prince by the Mediation of a Rebel with 20000 Men to support him; or at least, however successful it may prove with an unfortunate earthly Prince, constrained by the Fate of War to take Laws from his Subjects, God is not to be used in that Manner; the awful Majesty of Heaven is not to be trifled with; he has a peculiar Grandeur annexed to his Being, which will not consist with an Affront from his Creatures, formed by his Hands, and moulded by his Power.

The narrow Bounds of this Discourse will not suffer me to enlarge so far upon this Subject as I could wish: But there are two grand Points more, of which I shall take a transitory View, viz. the Sacraments.

2 Whether that Tongue can bless, or those Hands can break the Bread which is to be the Symbol of eternal Life, while they are ingaged against the Saviour of the World, whom the Elements are to represent; nay even when the Act of Consecration is sinful,

let any impartial Person judge. The Eucharist is the dearest Pledge of Charity and Christian Communion : But in the Hands of Schismaticks it is the Cement of their unrighteous Leagues and Conspiracies against Heaven ; surely to join with such Men, is to offer to God the Sacrifice of Fools.

As to Baptism, if the Person is not rightly ordained, it can be no Baptism ; because he never had Authority to admit Persons into Christ's Fold. But if the Commission is valid, and he who has that Commission turns Rebel, and makes use of that Authority to list Soldiers into his Rebellion against God, we may easily judge what sort of Baptism this must be ; and which will more easily appear from what follows in Relation to the Inefficacy of such pretended spiritual Administrations.

If we compare the *Jewish* Institutions with the Christian, and consider how numerous were theirs, and how few our own, we shall find theirs make up in Pomp what they wanted in Spirit. But the Christian Institutions are few in Number, but much more exalted in their Nature than those *beggarly Elements*, (as St. Paul calls them) which have gone before ; but still even these nakedly considered are only empty Vehicles of Grace, they come empty and return as they came : But the Spirit of God overshadows them, makes them efficacious to our Souls, and Fore-runners of the Rewards promised to the worthy Receivers thereof.

The

The Mysteries lie concealed under the Covert of the outward Institution; the Effects imperceptibly assimilate with our Souls, and nourish us to eternal Life.

But the Spirit hath no where promised always to attend those Institutions ; for that would indeed make them Charms and Spels : But there are previous Conditions without which the outward Institutions are no more than the *Jewish* Sacrifices, which, as they proceeded from an ungrateful People, God declared that his Soul abhorred them.

What are Baptism and Confirmation without the Spirit? The first makes nominal Christians, and no more, and the latter is nothing at all ; for we may invoke our Hearts out, the Spirit will never be divided against the Kingdom of Christ, and attend the Tents of Rebellion.

What is the Eucharist but eating and drinking our own Damnation, if we eat and drink unworthily ? But can it be otherwise, if God withholds his Grace, and refuses to send his Spirit to overshadow the Elements and denies to shed his Blessing upon them ?

Thus it appears from a due Consideration of what has been said, under what Obligations we lie to avoid any Communication with Schism. The dreadfull Effects I have already shewn ; which ought to awaken any Soul, which has a Regard to its own Happiness, hereafter to be upon its Guard. I know the common trifling Objection made, that the

the Notions I have here advanced are too narrow, and confine the Church to a small Body of Men, and unmercifully damn the rest which exceed in Number and in Power. To which I answer, That the Presbyterians in this Kingdom will get no Ground of the Papists if they appeal to Numbers, nor has the Scripture in any Place directed us to the Church by that Mark, which may sooner send us to Paganism and to Mahometanism than to Christianity. Nay I should rather suspect my self wrong in following a Crowd ; because our blessed Saviour has told me, *Enter ye in at the strait Gate ; for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be which go in thereto : Because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.*

I can recommend nothing therefore to you of this suffering Church with more earnest Bowels of Exhortation, than a strict Care as to Communion. As to those who have not determin'd, but hang loose as to their Principles, I would not have them flatter themselves that there is any Merit in sharing their Worship between two Religions. We may say with *Elijah*, *How long halt ye between two Opinions ? If the Lord be God, follow him : But if Baal, then follow him.* And presently after he subjoins, *That he only remain'd a Prophet of the Lord, but of Baal's Prophets were 450 Men.* We must not always seek for the Church of Christ in Prosperity, for

for suffering sometimes is her peculiar Glory. She is forced to make her Way against Principalities and Powers, to wade through Seas of Blood, and fight her Way thro' her Enemies, with the Christian Weapons of Prayers and Tears ; and this must be her Case till the Fulness of the *Gentiles* comes to the Brightness of her Rising : Which God of his Mercy grant for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.



2. 1. M. I. A.